Organization of the Forest Plan and Assessment

The wildlife portion of the proposed action (Forest Plan Components) is under Chapter 2: Forest wide direction, titled Threatened, Endangered, Proposed and Candidate Species and Species of Conservation Concern-Wildlife. The wildlife portion of the Forest Plan Assessment is in three parts. Section 5.0, Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, and Candidate Species – Wildlife; Section 5.2, Potential Species of Conservation Concern – Wildlife; and Section 7.0, Ecosystem Services and Multiple Uses – Wildlife.

Authorities governing Forest Service Wildlife Management

- Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 USC 1531-1544, 87 Stat.884)
- National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976 (Pub.L. 94-588)
- National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (P.L. 91-190) (42 U.S.C. 4321–4347)
- Multiple-Use, Sustained-Yield Act of June 12, 1960 (74 Stat. 215, as amended)
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) (16 U.S.C. 703–712),
- Migratory Bird Treaty Reform Act of 2004 (MBTRA) (Pub. L. 108–447, 118 Stat. 2809, 3071–72),
- Executive Order 13186. Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds. January 10, 2001. Federal Register Vol. 66, No. 11, January 17, 2001.
- Revised List of Migratory Birds: Final Rule. 50 CFR Parts 10 and 21 - Federal Register, Vol. 78, No. 212. Friday, November 1, 2013. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Dept. of the Interior
- Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act of 1980
- Fish and Wildlife Improvement Act of 1978 (16 U.S.C. 742l),
- Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 (16 U.S.C. 742a–j).
- Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (16 U.S.C. 661–666c),
- Sikes Act of September 16, 1960, (16 U.S.C. 670a)

- Forest Service Manual (FSM) 2601.1 – Laws and Orders.
- Forest Service Manual (FSM) 2601.2 – Departmental Regulation 9500-4.
- Forest Service Manual (FSM) 2670.12 – Departmental Regulation 9500-4.

In addition, this assessment is consistent with the state of Idaho's authority and responsibility to preserve, protect, perpetuate and manage all wildlife within the state of Idaho as per Idaho Statutes, Title 36-103 (Idaho 1976). In support of Idaho Statute 36-103, the state of Idaho has identified wildlife species and proposed conservation actions for the species listed in the Idaho Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS) (IDFG 2005).

The Idaho Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy is considered a key element of the best available science used in this assessment. Twelve of the 13 of the identified Species of Conservation Concern (SCC) are considered Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the CWCS

(IDFG 2005). The CWCS displays the distribution of these species, as modeled, using data available from the USGS GAP Analysis Program (GAP) (IDFG 2005). GAP modeling was used to represent the predicted distribution of terrestrial species that regularly breed in Idaho. Point locations of species sightings are also depicted on these species accounts maps in the CWCS (IDFG 2005). These data is displayed in the species range figures from the CWCS.

Wildlife was divided into three separate categories for assessment and development of Plan components:

1. Threatened and Endangered Species. Those having status under the federal Endangered Species Act, including endangered, threatened, proposed and candidate species.
    a. Those species include: lynx (threatened) and wolverine (proposed). The fisher was petitioned for listing in September of 2013 and therefore is not a TEPC species. It is a potential Species of Conservation Concern.
    b. Federal laws, regulations and guidelines set mandatory management direction and boundaries for T&E species. These authorities are cited in the Plan Components.
    c. Existing regulatory mechanisms: Northern Rocky Lynx Management Direction, 2007, and Canada Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy, 2nd edition 2000, and 3rd edition, 2013.

2. Species of Conservation Concern (SCC).

    a. Definition under the rule. Potential SCC are defined as, "Any species, other than federally-recognized threatened, endangered, proposed, or candidate species, that is known to occur in the plan area and for which the Regional Forester has determined that the best available scientific information indicates a substantial concern about the species capability to persist over the long-term in the plan area". (36 CFR 219.9, Directives. Chapter 10, Section 12.52).

    b. Selection process and decision authority.

    Step 1 – Identification of species from many sources, including Idaho SWAP, etc. . . .
    Step 2 – Screening of species for further consideration in the planning process (did they meet the criteria under the Rule).
    Step 3 - Grouping species where possible and identifying habitat associations.
    Step 4 – Identifying potential plan components for species identified as potential SCC.
    Step 5 – Selecting SCC based on coarse and fine-filter needs of species evaluated.

    Potential SCC list:

        White-headed woodpecker
        Pygmy nuthatch

Lewis' Woodpecker
Fisher
Flammulated owl
Boreal Owl
American three-toed woodpecker
Mountain quail
Fringed myotis
Californian myotis
Townsend's big-eared bat
Bighorn sheep
Coeur d'Alene salamander

3. "Other" wildlife species. Numbers alone prevent us from assessing all wildlife species, so our focus was on species with economic or social importance, or those that manipulate the environment (so-called Multiple Use Species). Plan components were not developed for every species of wildlife, only as the IDT deemed appropriate (again referring to vegetation management).
    a. Elk, white tail deer, mule deer, black bear, Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, mountain goat, moose, mountain lion, grey wolf, furbearers group. These are all species managed by Idaho Fish and Game as game animals, though all have non-consumptive values as well.
    b. Assessments were based on IDFG species management plans and annual Pittman-Robertson Reports.
    c. Sections on other species, like small game species, may be following, but are not expected to result in new components because of their minor importance on the forest and limited forest management effect/authority.

Assumptions:

The viability and persistence of many wildlife species will be supported by restoring and maintaining ***key ecosystem components*** that reflect the natural range of variability (NRV).

> ***Ecosystem.*** A spatially explicit, relatively homogeneous unit of the Earth that includes all interacting organisms and elements of the abiotic environment within its boundaries. An ecosystem is commonly described in terms of its:
> ***1. Composition.*** The biological elements within the different levels of biological organization, from genes and species to communities and ecosystems.
> ***2. Structure.*** The organization and physical arrangement of biological elements such as, snags and down woody debris, vertical and horizontal distribution of vegetation, stream habitat complexity, landscape pattern, and connectivity.
> ***3. Function.*** Ecological processes that sustain composition and structure, such as energy flow, nutrient cycling and retention, soil development and retention, predation and herbivory, and natural disturbances such as wind, fire, and floods.

> ***4. Connectivity.*** Ecological conditions that exist at several spatial and temporal scales that provide landscape linkages that permit the exchange of flow, sediments, and nutrients; the daily and seasonal movements of animals within home ranges; the dispersal and genetic interchange between populations; and the long-distance range shifts of species, such as in response to changing climate. *(36 CFR 219.19)*
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> **Ecological integrity.** The quality or condition of an ecosystem when its dominant ecological characteristics (for example, composition, structure, function, connectivity, and species composition and diversity) occur within the natural range of variation and can withstand and recover from most perturbations imposed by natural environmental dynamics or human influence. (36 CFR 219.19)

Vegetation components provide connectivity, diversity, ecological sustainability, etc. Therefore, the Vegetation components in the FP are integral to wildlife and are cross referenced where appropriate. Wildlife components were not written for wildlife if the specialists determined PCs for vegetation would provide adequate habitat.

Plan components were written for some species that have narrow habitat needs that are not specifically referred to in the vegetation components (for example, caves for bats or limestone outcrops for gastropods). Other species-specific plan components were written for species when management needs are not related to vegetation (for example, bighorn sheep disease prevention).

Plan components are based on solely on biology; they do not contemplate social issues or desires. For instance, disturbance by motorized vehicles was a threat identified in the source materials for many species of wildlife. There are several Wildlife Plan Components aimed at eliminating or minimizing effects of motorized disturbance from a strictly biological perspective; those range closures to seasonal restrictions. We did not attempt to resolve questions about where and how much motorized use is appropriate or to balance biological needs with social interests.

What's good (or not so good) management for one species may not benefit other wildlife. For instance, restoration of large open areas will benefit elk by providing succulent browse; but may adversely affect fisher because fisher will not cross or forage in large openings. We did not attempt to resolve questions of the relative impacts of management on various species. Yet.

Plan components have been assumed to benefit other wildlife (*e.g.*, elk security buffers will provide most other Forest species protections from motorized disturbance).